



Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

Planning for the Challenges Ahead



Jon Sanabria
Acting Director of Planning

May 21, 2009

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Supervisors:

PRIORITY NEEDS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2009-10

The Department of Regional Planning is submitting its priority needs and funding requirements for Fiscal Year 2009-10. These priority needs will, if funded, enable the department to provide improved levels of service for the Board of Supervisors, Regional Planning Commission, unincorporated communities, landowners, and the general public. The programs will affect every supervisorial district and effectuate strategic plan strategies and objectives of the County through service and workforce excellence, and organizational effectiveness.

Our first priority need is the **Restoration of Land Use Regulation Division Positions (\$330,000)**. Three (3.0) budgeted positions were deleted from the FY 09-10 budget due to a curtailment imposed by the Chief Executive Office. The staff will provide enhanced customer service and adequate personnel in the nine field offices. Staff is also necessary to provide minimum levels of proactive and reactive enforcement to the 2nd and 3rd Supervisorial Districts.

Our next priority is the **Restoration of Advance Planning Programs (\$614,000)**. One (1.0) position was deleted from Advance Planning due to the Chief Executive Office imposed curtailment and three (3.0) positions were transferred from Advance Planning to Current Planning to reduce permit backlog and generate additional revenue. Additional staff is necessary to effectively manage the growing number of community planning projects undertaken through the direction of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and also to comply with State-mandated requirements. Funding is also needed to pay for on-going consultant services to define and make recommendations for the design and methodology to automate, update, and streamline the zoning ordinance.

Our next priority is the **Hearing Examiner Pilot Program (\$440,000)**. The (3.0) positions originally allocated to the Hearing Examiner Section were given up (lost) to the budget curtailment imposed by the Chief Executive Office. The program will provide community outreach, and responsive and high quality public service. Since this program was initially proposed two years ago, the cost to fully implement has increased. These costs, including other Departments costs to attend the meeting, will need to be added to the budget prior to implementing the pilot program.

The next priority need is the **Zoning Ordinance Update for Green Buildings (\$227,000)**. The Board of Supervisors is developing a taskforce to implement the Green Building Program in collaboration with the Department of Public Works. To implement this program, staff training, public education, and public outreach is required. The outreach requires staff to be available for questions and technical assistance, preparation of informational materials to be used by staff and applicants when they come into either the Planning or Building and Safety offices, and disseminating information about the Green Building Program to the public, town councils, realtors, and other stakeholders

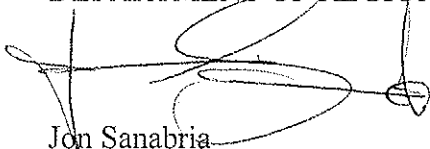
The complete list of priorities and their additional costs, number of positions, and other details is attached. The programs range from the community plans to permit processing to zoning enforcement and include:

- **Nuisance Abatement Team Inspectors/Coordinators (\$194,000)**
- **Zoning Enforcement for Antelope Valley and Santa Clarita Valley (\$251,000)**
- **Community Based Planning Program (\$302,000)**
- **Antelope Valley Area Plan Update (\$662,000)**
- **Housing Element Implementation (300,000)**
- **Technology Enhancements (\$200,000)**
- **Enterprise Content Management (ECM) Project (\$500,000)**
- **Zoning and Economic Feasibility Study (\$200,000)**

As stated in the past, it is our strong belief that funding these priorities will assist in our stated planning mission to protect and enhance our communities overall quality of life by planning for smart growth that promotes sustainable development, conserves energy, preserves the environment, minimizes global warming, and encourages economic development that links housing and employment. We are confident that these programs will improve customer service, provide community outreach, and enhance decision making throughout the County. We strongly recommend your consideration and funding of the priority needs listed herein for next year.

Sincerely,

DEPARTMENT OF REGIONAL PLANNING



Jon Sanabria
Acting Director of Planning

JS:TNE:KC:emr

c: William T. Fujioka, Chief Executive Officer
Robert E. Kalunian, Acting County Counsel
Sachi A. Hamai, Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors

DEPARTMENT OF REGIONAL PLANNING
FY 2009-10
ISSUES/PRIORITIES

<i>Program</i>	<i>Gross Appropriation</i>	<i>Revenue/IFT</i>	<i>Net County Cost</i>	<i>Budgeted Positions</i>
1. Restore Land Use Regulation Positions	\$330,000	--	\$330,000	3.0

The need to provide enhanced customer service and adequate personnel in the nine field offices is a vital part to implementing customer service improvements. An additional two (2.0) positions are required to address the problem of inadequate staffing in our field offices. The field offices are distributed throughout each of the five Supervisorial Districts and currently, five of the field offices (Antelope Valley, Arcadia, La Puente, East Los Angeles, and Firestone) experience heavy customer traffic and lengthy wait times. These positions will improve the overall customer service by ensuring more experienced planners are available in our field offices and serve as backup during vacations, sickness, training, and vacancies while reducing customer counter and phone wait times, shortening permit review period, and decreasing the number of complaints.

In addition, one (1.0) position is necessary for Zoning Enforcement I to provide minimum levels of proactive and reactive service to the 2nd and 3rd Supervisorial Districts. Zoning Enforcement I is required to respond to constituent complaints and perform conditional use permit inspections and conditions checks in a timely manner. This additional position will prevent a delayed responsiveness to constituent complaints and the elimination of all proactive enforcement while allowing the current staff to meet case processing timetables, to participate in the Nuisance Abatement Teams and Neighborhood Enhancement Teams, and provide community outreach within the 2nd and 3rd Supervisorial Districts.

<i>Program</i>	<i>Gross Appropriation</i>	<i>Revenue/IFT</i>	<i>Net County Cost</i>	<i>Budgeted Positions</i>
2. Restoration of Advance Planning Programs	\$614,000	--	\$614,000	4.0

An additional four (4.0) positions is necessary to effectively manage the growing number of community planning projects Advance Planning has undertaken under the direction of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and also to comply with State-mandated requirements. Advance Planning is currently managing several major projects which include the East Los Angeles Transit Oriented District and Specific Plan, the update of the Hacienda Heights Community Plan, the Florence-Firestone Visioning Project, Airport Land Use Commission, an Implementation Program for the Baldwin Hills Community Standards District, and a variety of local coastal program (LCP) implementation activities such as completion of the Santa Monica Mountains LCP, completion of the response to the Marina del Rey LCP Periodic Review, and initiation of updates of community plans as required by the General Plan.

As a result of budget curtailments and a reduction of revenue, the Department has not been able to encumber the remaining balance for its Zoning Ordinance Update Program (ZOUP) contract. Additional funding will need to be encumbered during FY 09-10 to pay the existing vendor for services received. Funding is for consultant services to define and make recommendations for the design and methodology to automate, update, and streamline the zoning ordinance. This effort will modernize provisions of the ordinance to make it less complex to read and interpret, thereby reducing the County's future liability due to misinterpretation, as well assisting economic revitalization efforts in the County. Failure to fund this need will hinder DRP from complying with two Board motions directing all affected

departments to identify and utilize streamlining mechanisms to assist in development of affordable housing and to stimulate the economy by easing the path to development.

<i>Program</i>	<i>Gross Appropriation</i>	<i>Revenue/IFT</i>	<i>Net County Cost</i>	<i>Budgeted Positions</i>
3. Hearing Examiner Pilot Program	\$440,000	--	\$440,000	4.0

The Hearing Examiner process requires funding for four (4.0) positions to provide community outreach, and provide responsive, efficient, and high quality public service. The new procedure increases opportunities for public participation, enables more effective public hearings and improves feedback to project applicants. This will only be applicable to major development projects which are likely to have a high degree of controversy and/or public participation. Examples of types of cases that the Hearing Examiner will shepherd through the review and approval process include large residential and commercial subdivisions involving hundreds of lots, major landfill projects, regional shopping centers, etc. These complex projects require a variety of discretionary land use entitlements such as zone changes, specific plans variances and conditional use permits. These types of projects also involve coordination with a variety of county, state and federal agencies. The Hearing Examiner procedure has long been used in other jurisdictions. The procedure has been successful and has accomplished its intended goals of promoting public participation, making public meetings more accessible, and as well as providing community outreach. The pilot program does not include other County Departments costs to attend the meetings and will need to be included before the pilot can be implemented.

<i>Program</i>	<i>Gross Appropriation</i>	<i>Revenue/IFT</i>	<i>Net County Cost</i>	<i>Budgeted Positions</i>
4. Zoning Ordinance Update – Green Buildings	\$198,000	--	\$198,000	2.0

The Board of Supervisors is developing a taskforce to implement the Green Building Program, which was developed in collaboration with the Department of Public Works. To implement this program, staff education as well as outreach is required. The outreach involves an additional two (2.0) positions to be available for questions and technical assistance, preparation of informational materials to be used by staff and applicants when they come into either the Planning or Building and Safety offices, and disseminating information about the Green Building Program to the public, town councils, realtors, and other stakeholders. Implementation of the ordinances will improve business practices and operational efficiency by having the same materials available at Public Works and Regional Planning to ensure the materials and information provided is current and consistent.

<i>Program</i>	<i>Gross Appropriation</i>	<i>Revenue/IFT</i>	<i>Net County Cost</i>	<i>Budgeted Positions</i>
5. Nuisance Abatement Team Inspectors/Coordinators	\$194,000	--	\$194,000	2.0

The Nuisance Abatement Team (NAT) is an existing multiagency taskforce assembled to abate the more difficult Code violations and public nuisance conditions on private property within the 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 5th Supervisorial Districts. Currently, the Department does not have a designated Nuisance Abatement Coordinator for the 5th Supervisorial District. The addition of one (1.0) planner for the NAT to cover the Antelope and Santa Clarita Valley and one (1.0) planner for the NAT to cover the San Gabriel Valley (Altadena and San Gabriel Areas) will improve staff efficiency and the Organizational Effectiveness of the Zoning Enforcement section and the NAT.

<i>Program</i>	<i>Gross Appropriation</i>	<i>Revenue/IFT</i>	<i>Net County Cost</i>	<i>Budgeted Positions</i>
6. Zoning Enforcement for Antelope Valley and Santa Clarita Valley	\$251,000	--	\$251,000	3.0

The number of complaints in the Antelope Valley (5th Supervisorial District) have increased from the previous years. In addition, the Department is being requested to participate in new Task Force investigations such as Illegal Dumping and Illegal Dog Breeding. These special Task Forces require existing staff to dedicate extensive hours, which reduces the staff's effectiveness in addressing other zoning violations. Violations in the Antelope Valley are spread over a wide geographical area requiring staff to travel long distances and through areas not clearly defined by property boundaries. More staff hours are required to locate and inspect properties and enforce the zoning code. The Antelope Valley requires that existing staff be maintained and that an addition of three (3.0) positions be assigned to Zoning Enforcement III in order to effectively deal with the increased complaints and the specialized enforcement Task Force.

<i>Program</i>	<i>Gross Appropriation</i>	<i>Revenue/IFT</i>	<i>Net County Cost</i>	<i>Budgeted Positions</i>
7. Community Based Planning Program	\$302,000	--	\$302,000	3.0

This program reflects funding for three (3.0) positions which will establish heightened collaboration among County agencies that have a direct effect on the preparation and implementation of area and community plans. The complexity of requirements for sustainable plans and the multitude of agencies' expertise needed demands thorough coordination. Collaborative efforts will ensure the most efficient service to the public through a holistic approach that covers all facets of plan preparation. Not only will the public be better served by well prepared plans, County operations will be served by an improved business practice that promotes collaboration and efficiency, leading to cost savings.

<i>Program</i>	<i>Gross Appropriation</i>	<i>Revenue/IFT</i>	<i>Net County Cost</i>	<i>Budgeted Positions</i>
8. Antelope Valley Area Plan Update	\$662,000	--	\$662,000	2.0

As mandated by Section 65103 of the Government Code, the Department must update the Antelope Valley Area Plan as it was last updated in 1986. Staff and one-time consultant services will be needed to complete the Environmental Impact Report and establish numerous Community Standards Districts for the Antelope Valley Area Plan Update. This effort has been underway since July 2007 and funding is necessary to complete the update in a timely manner.

<i>Program</i>	<i>Gross Appropriation</i>	<i>Revenue/IFT</i>	<i>Net County Cost</i>	<i>Budgeted Positions</i>
9. Housing Element Implementation	\$300,000	--	\$300,000	0.0

The Housing Section requests consultant services for the preparation of environmental reporting documents associated with community planning programs.

Consultant services are needed for the preparation of CEQA documentation, including the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration and/or Environmental Impact Report, and supporting technical analyses. If the contract is not obtained, the staff would prepare the environmental documents. However, if the project concludes that a Mitigated Negative Declaration of Environmental Impact Report is needed, the project will be put on hold until the services are obtainable, and the implementation of the Housing Element, which is monitored annually by the State Department of Housing and Community Development, would be put on hold. The staff does not have the capacity to prepare the technical studies needed to support the appropriate environmental determination of the project.

A consultant is also needed to provide technical assistance for the preparation of environmental reporting documents associated with community planning programs to comply with California Environmental Quality Act requirements. Without the expertise of an outside consultant, staff would lack the technical support needed for sufficient environmental review and analysis. This would lead to issues regarding compliance with California Environmental Quality Act guidelines and open up community planning programs to legal challenges on the adequacy of environmental review.

<i>Program</i>	<i>Gross Appropriation</i>	<i>Revenue/IFT</i>	<i>Net County Cost</i>	<i>Budgeted Positions</i>
10. Technology Enhancements	\$200,000	--	\$200,000	0.0

One-time funding is needed for improvement/training enhancements for the public hearing room, departmental ID card system, and emergency and disaster preparedness.

Funding is needed to purchase CIO approved media library software (upgrade to software being implemented in hearing room) that would manage a video library, implement web-based training sessions for DRP staff, and more effectively manage the RPC and hearing Officer webcast recordings. Each webcast will be stored in electronic format for viewing by the public at any time. The proposed software would allow DRP to manage the video recordings as a media library. In addition, if the Department conducted a training that was videotaped, the recording could be incorporated into the media library for viewing by staff at any time. This would allow DRP to provide enhanced training opportunities to all staff. Also, the public would benefit from the search capabilities and other aspects of the system via our public website.

One-time funding is needed for the implementation of a new departmental ID card system to bring the department into compliance with emergency preparedness and County security provisions and policies, including the installation of badge readers for improved security and management of public traffic through DRP offices. Cost includes card readers to be installed on the 1st, 10th, 11th and 13th floors with the ability to produce cards in-house.

A consultant is needed to provide simulation drills and training modules pertaining to office safety, emergency evacuations, first aid, and other emergency oriented topics. In-house staff does not have the expertise to train department employees. Employees' safety will be compromised if this project is not funded.

<i>Program</i>	<i>Gross Appropriation</i>	<i>Revenue/IFT</i>	<i>Net County Cost</i>	<i>Budgeted Positions</i>
11. Enterprise Content Management (ECM) Project	\$500,000	--	\$500,000	0.0

One-time services and supplies funding is needed for the Department to implement recommendations of the ECM study to further integrate document management with DRP. There are many other ECM sub-projects that need to be done such as Zone Change Ordinance Group pilot (<\$100,000), Zoning Enforcement Group implementation (>\$300,000), Land Development Coordinating Center case management automation (\$100,000-\$300,000), etc. A number of these projects could be described as improvements that will help the Department to be better positioned for new case filings and case processing as the economic recovery begins to take effect. The ECM projects will enhance in-house efficiencies and service delivery to the public. Depending on which ECM project is selected, there may be more public benefits than in others.

<i>Program</i>	<i>Gross Appropriation</i>	<i>Revenue/IFT</i>	<i>Net County Cost</i>	<i>Budgeted Positions</i>
12. Zoning and Economic Feasibility Study	\$200,000	--	\$200,000	0.0

Consultant services are needed for the preparation of a technical economic study to gauge the long-term feasibility of enacting a Countywide-inclusionary zoning ordinance, and to determine the appropriate housing set-asides and compensatory measures (i.e. in-lieu fee option, density bonuses, etc.)

If the contract services are not obtained the project will be put on hold until the services are obtainable, as the feasibility study is necessary in order to identify the appropriate housing set-asides and other provisions for an inclusionary zoning policy. The staff does not have the capacity to conduct the study in-house, which entails highly specialized and highly complex economic analysis.